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**June 17, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**RANDALLSTOWN MAN INDICTED FOR CONSPIRACY IN
INTERSTATE DISTRIBUTION OF COCAINE**

Baltimore, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that a federal grand jury has indicted Alonzo Ballard, age 35, of Randallstown, Maryland, and Arnulfo Ramirez, age 29, of Laredo, Texas, for crimes committed in connection with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine.

The one count indictment filed June 12, 2003 charges Ballard and Ramirez with conspiring to transport and possess with intent to distribute cocaine from March 10, 2003 to March 18, 2003. The charges arise from an investigation by U.S. Customs agents and other law enforcement agencies. U.S. Customs agents served a search and seizure warrant on a tractor/trailer driven by Ballard in Texas during the week of March 13, 2003 and recovered 5 duffel bags containing 200 bundles of cocaine weighing approximately 230 kilograms.

Ballard was subsequently arrested. Ballard was also indicted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas for possession with intent to distribute cocaine, stemming from the same incident. Following the Maryland indictment, Ramirez was arrested yesterday in Texas.

Both Ballard and Ramirez face a maximum sentence of life imprisonment and a potential fine of up to \$4,000,000. An initial appearance is scheduled today in Laredo, Texas for Ramirez.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by indictment is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of a joint investigation by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the United States Attorney's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Debra L. Dwyer.